

Report on Act 77 of 2013

16 VSA §4011(e) Reports

Annual Report on Early College Programs in the Vermont State Colleges System to the House and Senate Committees on Education

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Early College Report to Legislature

Legislation: Act 77 of 2013 An Act Relating to Encouraging Flexible Pathways to Secondary School Completion

Summary of Legislation: This act creates a Flexible Pathways Initiative within the Agency of Education to expand opportunities for secondary students to complete high school and achieve postsecondary readiness. Among other programs, the act provides the opportunity for students to complete 12th grade entirely on a college campus. Early college participants within the Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS) include the Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) at Vermont Technical College (VTC), and early college programs at the three other Vermont State Colleges. For the purposes of this report, the act specifically amends 16 VSA §4011(a) to require any postsecondary institution receiving funds for early college to “report to the House and Senate Committees on Education annually in January regarding the early college program, including data relating to the levels of participation, the success of the program in achieving the stated goals of the program to enhance secondary students’ education experiences and prepare them for success in college and beyond, and the specific outcomes for participating students relating to programmatic goals.”

Summary of Findings

1. Early College continues to be an important flexible pathway option for high school seniors across the state, despite the many challenges presented by the pandemic. Enrollments are stable this year compared with prior years at Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and the VAST program at Vermont Tech. CCV, which typically serves a high proportion of first-generation Early College students, saw a decline relative to the prior two years. CCV’s outreach is heavily reliant on high school staff, who are focused on COVID-related issues and helping students and families through the pandemic.
2. Despite the pandemic’s impacts, students continue to experience high levels of success, with a 91% fall-to-spring continuation rate during the pandemic year (2020-2021) last year compared to 92% the previous year. 98 students who continued to a second year of college in Fall 2019 were first-generation college students.
3. Act 77’s Dual Enrollment Program continues to serve as a critical ‘on ramp’ for students to gain skills and confidence to participate in Early College, particularly those students who may not begin high school with strong postsecondary aspirations and preparation. Approximately half of all students participating in Early College at CCV had previously enrolled in dual enrollment courses.
4. Affordability remains a significant concern for Vermont students and families, as illustrated by the robust participation in the 802 Opportunity Scholarship, Critical Occupations free tuition program pilot, workforce upskilling initiative, and other scholarship opportunities provided by the Legislature. Thanks to generous philanthropic support from the Vermont Community Foundation, CCV has created an **Early College Plus** program to provide more structured supports and defray costs for students who complete an Early College program resulting in a workforce-ready credential that is also on a pathway to an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. Included in this report are additional details on the program and highlights from some of the first students participating in the program.

Enrollment of VT High School Students in Early College & VAST Programs

ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

Early College

	<i>CCV</i>	<i>CU</i>	<i>NVU</i>	Total EC	VAST	Total
Fall 2021	140	37	45	222	49	271

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

Early College

	<i>CCV</i>	<i>CU</i>	<i>NVU</i>	Total EC	VAST	Total
Fall 2020	181	40	45	266	49	315
Spring 2021	161	39	38	247	40	287
Full AY students	161	39	38	247	40	287
Fall-Spring Continuation Rate						91%

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020

Early College

	<i>CCV</i>	<i>CU</i>	<i>NVU</i>	Total EC	VAST	Total
Fall 2019	160	37	48	245	65	310
Spring 2020	155	34	43	232	53	285
Full AY students	155	34	43	232	53	285
Fall-Spring Continuation Rate						92%

ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-2019

Early College

	<i>CCV</i>	<i>CU</i>	<i>NVU</i>	Total EC	VAST	Total
Fall 2018	143	40	75	258	77	335
Spring 2019	136	39	72	247	73	320
Full AY students	136	39	72	247	73	320
Fall-Spring Continuation Rate						96%

Continuation Rate of Early College and VAST Students

	<i>Class of 2020-2021</i>			
Fall 2021	EC	VAST	Total	%
Returned to the VSCS	70	15	85	27%
Attended other colleges	113	20	133	42%
Total continuing	183	35	218	69%
<i>of which:</i>				
First-Generation Students	87	11	98	31%
Not First-Generation	93	22	115	37%
Unknown First-Generation Status	3	2	5	2%
Did not continue at any college	83	14	97	31%

	<i>Class of 2019-2020</i>			
FALL 2020	EC	VAST	Total	%
Returned to the VSCS	94	32	126	41%
Attended other colleges	84	22	106	34%
Total continuing	178	54	232	75%
<i>of which:</i>				
First-Generation Students	78	18	96	31%
Not First-Generation	94	35	129	42%
Unknown First-Generation Status	6	1	7	2%
Did not continue at any college	67	11	78	25%

	<i>Class of 2018-2019</i>			
FALL 2019	EC	VAST	Total	%
Returned to the VSCS	103	29	132	39%
Attended other colleges	99	35	134	40%
Total continuing	202	64	266	79%
<i>of which:</i>				
First-Generation Students	85	21	106	32%
Not First-Generation	109	41	150	45%
Unknown First-Generation Status	8	2	10	3%
Did not continue at any college	56	13	69	21%

CCV's Early College Plus Program – January 2022

This year, the Vermont Community Foundation partnered with the Community College of Vermont to expand pathways to promising jobs for high school seniors participating in Early College through the creation of the Early College Plus Program. The Foundation offered \$1,000 in stipends to each student who enrolled in one of three high demand short-term career training programs: Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Graphic Design, or IT Service Desk Specialist. The funding was provided through the Vermont Community Foundation's VT COVID-19 Response Fund.

Community Foundation President and CEO Dan Smith noted, "These programs offer Vermont high school seniors an incredible opportunity to get a free jumpstart on college and career training. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when rising numbers of high school graduates nationally are deferring or choosing not to continue their education, we are doing everything we can to make it as easy as possible for Vermont students to pursue their post-high school pathways in ways that will help them and Vermont."

The Community Foundation and CCV identified the three specific certificate programs based on findings from the McClure Foundation's list of [short-term career training programs](#) it considers "best bets" for landing a promising Vermont job quickly. *Early College* students in Vermont's high school class of 2022 who enroll in the designated programs are receiving \$500 stipends in both the fall and spring semesters. The stipends can be used to help cover the cost of books, materials, transportation, food, fees, or other non-academic expenses associated with the cost of being a full-time student. These students also receive enhanced advising from a specialized counselor from the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). Completers of the program will earn a workforce-ready certificate and can begin looking for employment or choose to apply their credits to an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Early College makes a powerful impact in Vermont, where high tuition rates can be a barrier for post-secondary continuation. Programs like Early College, that help make college attendance more affordable by providing one full year at no cost, can make a tremendous difference for students who are deciding whether to pursue a certificate or degree. In addition to the free tuition offered through the State's EC Program, the Vermont Community Foundation has further incentivized participation by extending the EC Plus Program to Vermont students in the class of 2023 who enroll in CCV's EC program and earn one of the designated certificates. Along with the original certificates in Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Graphic Design, or IT Service Desk Specialist, two additional certificates have been added: Childcare and Digital Media Production.

In the fall of 21, CCV enrolled a total of 139 students in Early College, and 7 students participated in EC Plus. With additional program awareness among schools, students, and families and outreach and promotion, the College hopes to expand EC Plus to serve up to 50 students in the coming year. Several EC Plus students' stories are included in this report, along with a story from a student who completed EC last year and is matriculated in CCV's STEM program this year.

Riven Madison, CCV Early College Plus, Graphic Design

Riven Madison is from Plainfield, Vermont and attended Twinfield High School and Central Vermont Career Center before enrolling in CCV's Early College Plus program this year. Riven shares that, "I

decided on the Early College Plus program because I wanted to fill out my senior year, get college credits, and college experience that I could use at other schools. So far it has been a much-needed challenge and having the option to work from home has been great. After I graduate, I am planning on moving to Florida to attend Ringling College of Art. It's a great opportunity that is definitely worth taking, but it's still important to remember that these are college level courses, and they will challenge you."

Riven says, "I decided to attend CCV because I wanted to further my education and make sure I'm prepared for college. My first semester went quite smoothly. I took a variety of art classes including pencil drawing, graphic design, and Adobe program manipulation. I also took some English/History classes that were a lot of fun. I took two classes in person and three online, so far this has been a good balance for me. I work well from home, but I also enjoy doing school in person, so I appreciate the hybrid schedule. I wasn't able to collect college credits from Central Vermont Career Center because I worked from home, so when I was given this option at CCV I really appreciated it. I'm enthusiastic about the upcoming semester, and I'm excited to explore some new subjects!"

Julia Light – CCV Early College Plus Student

Julia Light is enrolled in CCV's Early College Plus program and will graduate from Twinfield High School in June while also earning a certificate in Cybersecurity from CCV. The Early College Plus program is supported by the Vermont Community Foundation and offers stipends and a dedicated VSAC counselor to help students to earn a credential during their Early College year. Julia attended Twinfield High School and Central Vermont Career Center before enrolling at CCV. According to Julia, "I didn't know about the EC Plus program until my college advisor, MK, suggested it for fall 21 classes. She recommended that I apply, and I got in. I decided to do this program for the fact I get a jump on college credits, and I am glad I did. My experience has been good! I have done it all online which has its struggles, but it fits very well with my schedule. I plan on going to college in either North Carolina or at Champlain college to study computer science." When asked what she would tell other students considering the EC Plus program, Julia said, "I would say if you get the opportunity to just do it! I know if I didn't do early college I wouldn't be where I am and wouldn't have met so many nice people."

Isabell Madill – From Dual Enrollment to Early College

CCV student Isabelle Madill first attended CCV as a dual enrollment student. She has been interested in languages from a young age, so she used her vouchers to enroll in French I and French II at CCV's Montpelier campus. Computer science is one of Isabelle's favorite subjects, so she applied to CCV's Early College program with the goal of learning more about her passion and earning college credit while on lockdown.

Isabelle first became interested in computer programming at the age of 12 when her mother gave her a book on programming in Visual BASIC. She discovered that she had an affinity for coding and her interest took off. When it came time to apply for college, she decided to pursue a degree in software engineering. With that in mind, Isabelle enrolled in Early College in September 2020 and took Web Design, Java Programming, and C++. After completing her free year in Spring 2021, she matriculated at CCV and is pursuing an Associate's of Science in STEM Studies with plans to transfer to Champlain

College or Norwich University in Fall 2022. Isabelle’s long-term career aspirations include a combination of her two greatest passions—outer space and robotics.

When asked about her advice for other students, Isabelle says “Give Early College a try—it is an extremely helpful resource that provides a test run for college, and, most importantly, it is already paid for. College can be a daunting prospect, but Early College provided an easy segue into the next stage of my education and as a homeschooler allowed me to move on when I was ready; I did not have to wait to officially graduate high school in order to start working on my degree. Another thing is that, unlike an education subsidized by the military, Early College comes with no strings attached.”

One of her strategies for success is to simply be honest. “I know that telling people not to be shy about asking for help is a typical piece of advice (albeit a useful one), but seriously, just ask. I have had teachers complain that they want to help their students but find it difficult to do so because the students never say anything, even if they explicitly offer help. If the teacher is unavailable, then ask a friend or family member—even if they don’t know the subject matter, simply having a fresh perspective can work wonders. Asking for help has benefits for both you and the teacher: the teacher gets a clearer idea of why you’re having trouble and you get a solution—or a different perspective at least. Also, even if you end up failing you can take comfort in the knowledge that you took advantage of the resources given.”